

Alternate 5-Paragraph Essay Instructions and Example

Paragraph 1: Begin your first paragraph indented. This paragraph should be a BRIEF overview (3-4 sentences) to tell what the book is mostly about. This is not the place for details. Your final sentence should state your chosen theme (chivalry, unexpected kindness, loyalty, trust, mercy, or oppression).

Paragraph 2: Indent. Give one (and only one) **strong, specific** example of your theme from the book and discuss your thoughts and reflections. Using your Reader's Response Journal will be very helpful. You should include one quotation, offset by quotation marks, that supports your thoughts. This paragraph should be 4-6 sentences long.

Paragraph 3: Indent. Give another **strong, specific** example of your theme from the book and discuss your thoughts and reflections. Again, include a single quotation. This paragraph should be 4-6 sentences long.

Paragraph 4: Indent. Give one final **strong, specific** example of your theme from the book. Discuss your thoughts and include a quotation. This paragraph should be 4-6 sentences long.

Paragraph 5: Indent. Write about your personal "take-aways" from your chosen theme. These are your reflections upon either chivalry, unexpected kindness, loyalty, mercy, trust, or oppression, as shown in *Otto of the Silver Hand*. What did this book teach you? Have you grown in some way? Have your views on this topic changed? Have your beliefs about this topic been reaffirmed? Make sure to provide DEEP THOUGHTS here.

Example Response Paper By Mrs. A. Writer

Otto of the Silver Hand, written by Howard Pyle, is a book about a young boy named Otto who lives in medieval Germany. When his mother dies shortly after his birth, his father leaves him at a monastery to be raised by monks for his first 12 years. His father comes back for him; however, shortly after he returns to the castle where he was born, Otto is abducted by a rival baron, who cuts off his hand in revenge for his father's deeds. While imprisoned in this rival castle, he is befriended by a young girl, and they promise that they will one day marry. Otto keeps his promise, despite the complications of his rescue. Throughout this book, Otto experiences unexpected kindness, which not only transforms his life, but also helps to shape him into a gentle, trustworthy young adult.

With the death of his mother, Otto has a tough start to his life. When the White Cross on the Hill becomes his new home, he could very well have experienced a lonely childhood, with care providers who provide him only the basics, in silence and lacking emotion. Instead, the monks happily accept Otto into their walls, provide him with love and attention, and share his care and education lovingly amongst themselves. Brother John becomes his most devoted caretaker, and he "never left his little charge, day or night." This simple monk spends hours with him, walking through the gardens, trailing through the vineyards, and lying in the wooden belfry. I believe these gentle, loving moments of unexpected kindness lay the foundation for Otto to feel secure and confident later in life.

Many years later, Otto finds another very unexpected, yet significant, source of kindness in the daughter of his captor. Baron Henry, who has vowed revenge against Otto's father, Baron Conrad, has chopped off the young boy's hand as repayment for wrongs done to him. Baron Henry's 8-year-old daughter, Pauline, finds him in a cell deep in the recesses of the castle, and "sitting upon the edge of his bed and gazing into his face with wide open eyes, she would listen to him by the hour." They develop a deep friendship, and while the promise of marriage at such age would seem silly to many, I believe that

they truly recognize the goodness in each other and are both sincere. Receiving such gentleness and care in such an unlikely place must have renewed Otto's faith in humanity after he had been exposed to such ugliness. In my opinion, Otto's friendship with Pauline solidifies the gentle, nurturing, thoughtful character that had been instilled upon him in the monastery.

The book closes with Otto being welcomed by Emperor Rudolph. As ruler over an entire land during a savage time when wrongs are done freely and without much concern, Rudolph has no reason to take any interest in poor little Otto. However, not only does he take an interest in the young boy, he treats him with great kindness and becomes his protector in his father's absence. He is taken into the royal court and has many honors bestowed upon him. Perhaps most importantly, Rudolph reunites Otto with the "one poor girl whose heart fluttered more than his," who has been the beat of his heart since his days locked in the cell of Trutz-Drachen. I believe that this kindness that was shown by Rudolph throughout the remainder of his childhood allows Otto to recover from the trauma of his youth. He now fully understands that it is possible and worthy to live in peace and to treat those around him with gentleness and respect, and this quality sets him apart from the world around him and brings him great recognition.

I cannot imagine what it must have been like to live in a time such as Otto's. It would have been so easy for him to have adopted the culture and character of the world that surrounds him and become a hardened, aggressive burgher like his father. I believe that it is his encounters with many people who show him unexpected and significant kindness that help to shape his view of mankind and gift him with the ability to see the good in people instead of evil. Even more than that, I think that Otto makes the conscious decision to allow these experiences to be the guide to his thoughts and actions instead of allowing the dark, violent encounters that he has to prevail. *Otto of the Silver Hand* has reaffirmed for me that we all have experiences throughout our lives that we can allow to transform us, either for the better or the worse; just as Otto has to make the choice to hear the voice of love and kindness and allow that to speak louder than the voice of anger and hatred, we too will need to make that choice at some point in our lives.